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SUMMARY OF THE ARCHEOLOGY OF SAGINAW VALLEY, MICHIGAN—III

By HARLAN I. SMITH

SAGINAW RIVER VALLEY

SAGINAW COUNTY

Melbourne Fields.—On August 28, 1890, Mr W. R. McCormick informed the writer that there were traces of ancient cornfields at Melbourne.

Carrollton Graves.—At Carrollton, on the west bank of Saginaw river, the sand-ridge is low and of dark material. On each side of the river marsh-land stretches away for miles. In 1893 Messrs Joseph and William Baird, and Mr Miles Purcell, and in 1894 Mr Ezra J. Demorest, reported that, when the foundation for the salt block in connection with the Bliss mill was being dug, human bones were found.

Hoyt Camp Site.—On the high sandy square now occupied by the post office and Hoyt Library in Saginaw, East Side, there were found potsherds, numerous chips and flakes of chert, and points chipped from the same material for spears, arrows, knives, drills, and scrapers. These seemed sufficient to indicate that the place was a camp site. Assistance was rendered in collecting at this place by Mr George Stevens and the late Mr Platt R. Bush.¹

¹ Platt Richard Bush, C.E., was born in Pentwater, Michigan, August 3, 1873. While professionally a civil engineer, he took a sincere interest in anthropology, giving much time in assisting the author in prosecuting excavations, in field work, and in drafting plans and maps, as is acknowledged in each case, although he expected no compensation and asked no such credit in the published results; indeed, he evidently desired no benefit other than the inward satisfaction of furthering knowledge of archeology. By his untimely death on October 4, 1898, anthropology lost a sincere friend as well as an active and generous constituent.

Warner Grave.—A human skeleton was found on the eastern side of Saginaw river, in the City of Saginaw, where the Cincinnati, Saginaw, and Mackinaw railroad passes through a sand-ridge at a point about one hundred and fifty feet east of the river, and directly north of the railroad switch. Here the black surface sand overlies a clay subsoil. About 1888 the mass of human bones was found resting on the subsoil at a depth of about two feet in the sand. It was entirely surrounded by a sandy material resembling in color red brick mortar with a slight purple shade. Some potsherds were found with it.

Lee Graves.—Human skeletons were found in the sand-ridge on the eastern side of the Saginaw river at the foot of Hoyt street. This was reported, about 1886, by workmen engaged in laying pipes in the street in front of the Lee mill.

McCoskry Camp Site.—Potsherds marked by cord impressions have been found on lot 10, block 26, Emerson's addition to the City of Saginaw, the second lot south of Meredith street on the ridge east of the bayou and Jefferson avenue. These would seem to indicate a small camp site.

Brooks Graves.—A number of human skeletons were found in the highest part of the sand-ridge located on lot 13, block 47, Emerson's addition to the City of Saginaw. The lot, which is owned by Mr George B. Brooks, is situated south of Meredith street and east of the river and Washington avenue. It was reported by Mr Brooks in 1894 that the skeletons were found several years earlier in excavating for the cellar of the house and that they were resting extended upon their backs, the heads lying in a small circle, with the bodies radiating from the central point.

Wright Graves.—A number of human skeletons were found at the base of the sand-ridge near the western end of the Middle Bridge. This was reported, about 1883, by Mr Guy Kennedy, who stated that the discovery was made by workmen while laying water-pipes.

*Saginaw Grave.*¹—A human skeleton was found about 1886, on the western side of the river, across the road to the west from the Court Street depot. This was near the site of Fort Saginaw and the first Saginaw trading-post. The place is at the base of the slope from a high ridge to the river. Mr Zachariah Baskin, captain of police, reported all the facts about the grave. It was one foot below the original soil, which had here been covered by about three feet of filling since the establishment of the city. The head was south, the foot north. A copper kettle, parts of a gun, glass moccasin beads, rings, and two metal bracelets prove this burial to be one of those made since the advent of the whites. One of the bracelets is small, as if for the wrist, while the other is large enough for the upper arm and shows impressions of a feather or feathers in the copper salts which incrust it. The bracelets seem to be made of an alloy plated with silver, and were doubtless purchased from French traders, probably within the last one hundred and fifty years.

Tik-wak-baw-hawning.—According to the *History of Saginaw County* (p. 772), "The territory embraced in the township of Buena Vista was called by the aborigines Tik-wak-baw-hawning, or Hickory place," and (p. 592) "was bounded on the north by Waig-hawning creek."

Germain Village Site.—About opposite the site of the Saginaw grave, on the crest of the sand-ridge following the bank along the eastern side of the Curt Emerson bayou, were found evidences of a village site. These were mainly on the land of Mr Edward Germain, lot 50 of Hoyt's subdivision of the James Riley reservation of the City of Saginaw. A few evidences were found on the lots, parallel to this, of Messrs W. G. Gage and W. H. Clark lying next north, and of Messrs E. T. and Clarence Judd lying next south. We have no data from the lots farther southward until the Ayres camp site is reached about an eighth of a mile

¹ See *Saginaw Evening News*, June 1, 1888, and *American Antiquarian*, vol. XI, No. 4, 1889, p. 249.

away. It is possible that these two places were parts of a continuous village site. The brow of the hill at this point is one hundred and thirty-eight feet east of the bank of the bayou. The clay subsoil is reached at a depth of about ten feet. Above it is a stratum of gravel, and on that a layer of light yellow sand over which lies the surface soil—a black sandy mold. In places the black soil fills depressions in the light sand, suggesting that they were storage pits or graves in which all traces of bones have vanished, leaving only the darker soil in the surrounding stratum of light sand. On the surface along this ridge there have been found numerous chipped points for spears, arrows, and knives, as well as potsherds, a sandstone tablet bearing incised lines, and an unfinished bird-shaped object. The last specimen had been pecked into form, but was polished only in places. In the refuse from the Germain graves, which may have come from the Germain village site rather than from these graves, were found a chipped chert arrowpoint, a piece of antler cut diagonally across to form a wedge-shaped implement (perhaps a wedge or club-head), and a broken gorget. Assistance was rendered in collecting at this site by Mr Fred Lange and Mr Charles Tiebs.

Germain Graves.—Three masses of human bones have been found by the writer on Mr Germain's lot, at intervals of about thirty feet along the crest of the ridge, and another mass was procured approximately the same distance back from the most northerly of these three. All of them had been plowed out, so that the particulars of burial were lost. The bones were soft and chalky; some of them were colored by a material resembling red brick mortar with a slight purple shade, similar to that found in the Warner grave.

A skull, with cuts along the left parietal, was procured through the courtesy of Mr William Glover Gage, who obtained it from this place.

In 1893 Mr Orla Milligan reported that he had found bones here. I am indebted to him for these specimens, which proved

to be human and represented at least four individuals, two of whom were children. One of the skeletons was undisturbed, and Mr Milligan removed it, reporting that it was found resting upon the back at full length, with the head toward the east. The arms were straight and extended slightly away from the sides of the body. Between the arm-bones and the ribs were five chipped points of stone. There were traces of a wooden box surrounding the skeleton, but no nails were found.

Workmen unearthed and reported skeletons of eight individuals at this place. They said iron knives were found with some of them.

Mr Charles H. Tiebs, the gardener for Mr Clarence Judd, reported that he found four more skeletons at a point in Mr Judd's garden about two hundred feet along the ridge on the second lot to the southward. The specimens found in the refuse from the Germain graves have been mentioned in the description of the Germain village site.

Germain Mounds.—Eight mounds were formerly situated on the Germain lot, but these were farther back from the bayou than the graves, and were beyond the sand-ridge. They rested directly upon the clay subsoil; all were of rectangular form and approximately one foot in height. They were composed largely of clay. The natural surface soil near them is vegetal mold.

Nothing has been found in these mounds to prove that they were made by the Indians, while cut iron nails and the fact that recruits for the Civil War camped in this vicinity suggest that they may possibly be the remains of temporary structures erected by the soldiers. Further evidence cannot now be obtained, as the mounds have all been destroyed.

No. 1 (9) was four hundred and three feet east of the Curt Emerson bayou, or two hundred and sixty-five feet beyond the Germain graves and forty-two feet south of the northern boundary of the lot. The mound was ten feet four inches long, east and west, by seven feet three inches wide. It was explored and

found to be made of burned clay interspersed with ashes and bits of charcoal to a depth of one foot. Below this was a lime-like substance and ashes in which were found bits of bone. Some of these bones were greenish in color, but no copper was found with them. There were also found some cut iron nails, and a soft red stone possibly used for paint. The soil showed no evidence of disturbance below a depth of about eighteen inches.

No. 2 (8) was twelve feet west of No. 4 and sixty-two feet five inches south of the northern boundary of the lot. It was six feet six inches long, east and west, by six feet wide. A hole to the southeast suggested the origin of the material of this mound.

No. 3 (6) was forty-four feet east of the nearest part of No. 1 and forty-two feet eight inches south of the northern boundary of the lot. The corners were much rounded by erosion and a longitudinal depression extended down its center. It was ten feet eight inches long, east and west, by seven feet four inches wide.

No. 4 (7) was directly south of No. 3 and fifty-two feet nine inches south of the northern boundary of the lot. The corners formed right angles. It was six feet six inches long, east and west, by four feet six inches wide.

No. 5 was thirty-eight feet east of No. 3 and forty-three feet seven inches south of the northern boundary of the lot. The eastern end was rounded and slightly higher in the center than other parts of the mound. It was twelve feet two inches long, east and west, by five feet ten inches wide. White ashes, charcoal, burned bone, baked clay, and an iron nail were found in this mound.

No. 6 (4) was forty-six feet east of No. 4 and fifty-four feet eight inches south of the northern boundary of the lot. It was nine feet long, east and west, by six feet eight inches wide. There was a hole, recently dug, at the west which had greatly injured the mound.

No. 7 (3) was thirty-eight feet east of No. 5 and forty-eight feet ten inches south of the northern boundary of the lot. It was eleven feet eight inches long, north and south, by eight feet two inches wide. The corners were much eroded.

No. 8 (2) was fifty-two feet five inches east of No. 7, forty-two feet one inch south of the northern boundary of the lot, and seventy-seven feet two inches west of the nearest point of Washington avenue. It was ten feet nine inches long, north and south, by six feet wide.

Hoyt Mounds.—According to oral reports by Mr William H. Clark, jr, there were mounds resembling the Germain mounds, which he had seen east of them, in Hoyt Park, on the brow of the clay ridge where it descends to the bayou to the east of it. These, however, were destroyed, by so-called landscape gardeners who graded Hoyt Park, instead of being preserved in the park as objects of historic interest.

Ayres Camp Site.—A camp site was located on the ridge which lies east of and parallel to the southern end of the Curt Emerson bayou, only about an eighth of a mile south of the Germain village site and possibly formed the southern end of the latter. At present, however, we have no evidence of this from the space between the Germain village site and the northern end of lot 49 of the James Riley reservation of the City of Saginaw. South of here evidence is most frequently found on the slope of the ridge rising from the Curt Emerson bayou, but enough has been seen to suggest that the full width of the ridge was inhabited as far east as the slope which descends to the second bayou east of the river. The ridge terminates at the little creek which flows out of the second bayou with a semi-circular sweep and discharges into the southern end of the Curt Emerson bayou. This ridge is mainly of clay with a surface soil of black loam, but along the western slope the surface soil is dark sand which is sometimes shifted by the wind. The underlying material at this part of the ridge is a light-colored, fine-

grained gravel. The site was probably a specially fortunate one for an Indian camp, since the border of the Curt Emerson bayou as late as 1880 was an excellent hunting-ground for woodcocks, ducks, and similar game, while the adjacent waters were unusually well supplied with pickerel, bass, and other fish. Burned and crackled fire-stones, one of which was fractured; flakes of chert, some of which were from the outer surface of concretions (and one of these has secondary chipping along one edge sufficient to indicate that it was a flake knife); a chipped fragment of a battered, water-worn piece of chert; potsherds, and chipped points have been found here.

*Ayres Mound.*¹—A mound was located at the Ayres village site on lot 43 of the James Riley reservation in the City of Saginaw, directly south of Court street. It was on the highest part of the clay ridge, some distance back from the sandy brow which follows the eastern bank of the Curt Emerson bayou, two hundred and eighty feet from the bayou and near Washington avenue.

Although not a large mound, this was a typical example of the low, dome-shaped mounds found in Saginaw valley. It was about thirty-four feet in diameter and eighteen inches in height. There is no doubt that it was once of greater altitude, and that it has been slowly reduced by erosion. In 1889 this mound, being covered with grass and flowers, had much the appearance of a neglected flower bed. The lot was then, as it is yet, covered by an apparently primeval forest of oak, elm, maple, walnut, and other trees. On the northwestern edge of the mound stood an oak seven feet four inches in circumference, which, having grown since the mound was built, showed that the structure was not recent.

Mr Charles W. Grant, residing on the lot next northward,

¹Smith (Harlan I.), "Primitive Remains in the Saginaw Valley, Michigan. The Ayres Mound": *The Archaeologist*, vol. 1, No. 3, March, 1893, pp. 51-53. See also the same article, slightly condensed and revised, in *The Saginaw Evening News*, April 15, 1893. *The Saginaw Courier-Herald*, May 6 and 12, 1893, also gives an abstract.

was the first to call attention to this mound. Permission to explore the work was granted the writer, early in April, 1892, by Mr E. R. Ayres, who then owned the land. At that time the mound was photographed preparatory to beginning its excavation. A trench was dug down to undisturbed earth along the western edge of the southern half of the mound, and was carried eastward, covering the entire southwestern quarter of the work; that is, all the soil and other materials that had been placed by the builders were removed and examined. From the middle of the mound a narrow trench was continued eastward through it, exhibiting a cross-section of the entire mound. Returning some months later to complete the excavation, it was found that in the meantime the remaining part of the structure had been destroyed.

The first layer of the mound, just below the sod, was about nineteen inches thick and composed of a dark, sandy mold, which could not be distinguished from the surface soil of the surrounding woods. Below this was a layer, varying from an inch to four inches in thickness, composed of black soil partly burned and thickly mixed with particles of charcoal. Between this layer of black material and the original surface of the clay below was a stratum of white ashes, which varied in width from a thin streak to two inches. Intermingled with the ashes were some large pieces of charcoal; and below this ash layer, with no black surface mold intervening, was the original clay of the ridge which had been burned in places almost to the hardness of brick. This layer of burned clay had a maximum thickness of about five inches, and below it there were no indications of previous disturbance by man.

It would seem possible that at the time the mound was built a fire had been made upon the ground, and that this burned the clay forming the first layer, consumed any carbonaceous surface mold that may have existed, and produced the ashes which formed the second stratum. Dark earth, possibly thrown on

among the remains of the fire, formed the third layer, above which surface mold was gradually deposited by natural means.

In the ash layer at a point about eight inches west of the center stake was found a single copper bead. This bead is spherical, measures about three-eighths of an inch in diameter, and is so much corroded that no metallic copper can be seen even by scratching the surface deeply.

Ten feet west of the center stake and about fourteen inches south, was discovered, in the black layer, a chipped leaf-shaped chert point, and four feet south of this a scraper, chipped from a flake of chert, was found in the surface soil. In the black layer were many pieces of burned and crackled diabase and other hard rock. These were probably fire-stones which had been used in the old hearths to support pottery kettles and which were accidentally taken up with the earth used in forming the mound. Here also were found large pieces of chert concretions, such as occur in situ near Bay Port and which were so much used by the aborigines of the whole valley for material from which to fashion their implements. These were all much burned. In the surface layer were found many pieces of this chert which had not been burned and which showed scars where flakes had been removed, probably for the manufacture of knives and arrowpoints. Many scrapers and flake knives were also found in this surface layer, all showing concentric structure. All the chipped implements found in or near the mound were made of what appears to be this same concretionary chert.

In the narrow trench, about nineteen inches east of the center stake and in the black layer, were found two fragments of pottery about half an inch in thickness and coated with a black layer on what had been the inside of the pot, while the outer part was ocher in color. The material was thickly mixed with quartz grains. The outer surface of the dish had been ornamented with slight depressions placed at regular intervals of about a quarter of an inch; these were apparently made with some sharp instrument.

In the surface layer, near the eastern border of the mound, a fragment of a finely polished celt blade of greenish argillite was found.

Ayres Graves.—About 1890, while digging for the foundation of the salt block in connection with the Ayres mill, about three hundred feet west of the Ayres mound and one hundred and eighty feet from the bank of the bayou, workmen came upon a number of human skeletons. These were unusually deep, being over four feet below the surface. The wind has piled the light sand in long dunes in this vicinity and may have deposited an accumulation of soil above the surface of the graves. Among the bones of these skeletons were found bear-teeth, deer-bones, and similar kitchen refuse. From the large number of fish-bones found one might conclude that these people took advantage of the resources of this locality near the bayou and that much of their subsistence was obtained from its waters. It is a noteworthy fact that no implements of defense or utensils for domestic use were discovered with the remains, while at the Ayres mound, only three hundred feet distant, such objects were found.

(Saginaw County to be continued.)